

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 0594

LIMDIS

FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT DUBS FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SWEL AF BG US
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE U.S. - SOVIET HEALTH COOPERATION IN BANGLADESH

REF: STATE 020228

1. BANGLADESH IS OF COURSE A MAJOR RECIPIENT OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE OF ALL KINDS (PRIVATE, VOLAG, BINATIONAL AND MULTINATIONAL) BECAUSE ITS NEEDS ARE OBVIOUS AND WELL-PUBLICIZED. AT BEST IT FACES A CONTINUING CHALLENGE TO ITS BUREAUCRACY IN COORDINATING AND CHANNELING AID AND MANY PROJECTS, LAUNCHED WITH INTEREST, EVEN ENTHUSIASM, LAG IN IMPLEMENTATION; EVEN THOSE WHICH ARE CARRIED THROUGH TO PHYSICAL COMPLETION OFTEN FAIL AFTERWARDS BECAUSE THE BUREAUCRACY EITHER DOESN'T EXTEND FAR ENOUGH DOWN INTO THIS PREDOMINATELY ILLITERATE SOCIETY OR BECAUSE THE FUNDS AND HUMAN ENERGY TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-THROUGH ARE SO SCARCE. WHILE THE NEEDS ARE OFTEN CLEAR ENOUGH, THE REMEDIES TURN OUT TO BE COMPLEX, MORE EXPENSIVE, AND MORE TIME CONSUMING THAN ANTICIPATED. THIS HAS TO BE RECOGNIZED BY ANY OUTSIDERS OR FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED.

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2. BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS AT WORK HERE, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE RIVALRY AMONG SPONSORS FOR PROJECTS THAT LOOK HOPEFUL. SOMETIMES THIS RIVALRY IS PRODUCTIVE. HOWEVER, MOST OF THE WORTHY PROJECTS, IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LIKE THOSE CITED IN PARA. (1) OF THE MEMORANDUM, HAVE BEEN TAKEN UP IN SOME FORM AT SOME TIME IN BANGLADESH. (I ASSUME OUR INTEREST WOULD BE IN

DISCRETE AND EASILY IDENTIFIABLE PROJECTS.) MOST OF THESE PROJECTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF WIDE SCOPE, PERFORCE HAVE TO OPERATE THROUGH THE BDG BUREAUCRACY; THEIR SPONSORS ALL HAVE TO GET ALONG WITH IT.

3. THESE SOMETIMES-DIFFICULT CONDITIONS ARE OF COURSE NOT UNIQUE TO BANGLADESH, BUT MAY WELL BE MORE ACUTE HERE.

4. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH IS STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST. IT IS HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS OF SOVIET MOTIVES AND HAS, WE UNDERSTAND, SOUGHT TO REDUCE THE VERY LARGE SOVIET OFFICIAL PRESENCE HERE. THE IDEA OF SOVIET TECHNICIANS OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL WOULD BE ANATHEMA, I AM SURE. THE CONTINUING SOVIET ALLIANCE WITH INDIA, A COUNTRY THEY STILL FEAR, BOTHERS BANGLADESHIS. THEY MIGHT NOT SAY NO TO A JOINT U.S.-USSR PROJECT UNDER WHO AUSPICES, BUT I AM CONFIDENT THEY WOULD AT A MINIMUM DRAG THEIR FEET.

5. ALTHOUGH SOVIET-U.S. RIVALRY IS NOT CONSPICUOUS IN BANGLADESH THE BANGLADESHIS REGARD IT AS A GIVEN ON THE WORLD SCENE AND THEY LOOK TO US TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE WHICH KEEPS "COMMUNISTS" FROM TAKING OVER MORE OF THE WORLD. THEY MIGHT MISINTERPRET THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW PROPOSAL AS FAR AS BANGLADESH IS CONCERNED, AND MIGHT EVEN WORRY ABOUT IT IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTEXT OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. I CANNOT JUDGE WHETHER THE REFTTEL PROPOSAL MAKES SENSE IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS; IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW IT WOULD IN BANGLADESH. BERGESEN

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